13th. November 2020.

President’s Report

First of all my apologies to the committee and all our members for not presiding over this

Meeting tonight. Although I have used computers for over 25 years, I did not feel my tech

Expertise was enough to tackle presiding over this meeting via Zoom, without making a complete hash of it.

My thanks to Ivor for standing in for me. I shall be watching and learning!

It goes without saying that the last year has been the most challenging any of us can ever remember,

And we are lucky that our committee have risen to the challenges in keeping in touch with members

Despite the lockdowns and the severe limitations imposed on our freedoms to meet and socialise.

Sadly we have lost several longstanding members this year – Brian Hitchens whose impact on shaping the Society is still in evidence; Ann Clowes a dedicated committee member whose extensive knowledge of all things horticultural will be missed by many; Nancy Felthouse who regularly entered our monthly competitions; and longstanding members Pam Ellis and Melva Brown.

So we now need to look forward to the coming year, and hope that the worst of the Covid 19 impact

Is over and that gradually over the next six months life will gradually get back to pre Covid normal.

As with all challenging times, there are little glimpses of upsides, and surely one of the biggest upsides for all horticultural societies is the huge increase in the numbers of people discovering for the first time the attraction of gardening. With garden centres closed during the first lockdown,

Gardeners turned to online buying with one online plant store reporting a 500% increase in its sales

During the first lockdown. Demand for allotments reached an all time high, and the RHS reported a 500% increase in the younger generation accessing its website. This is a big opportunity for all horticultural societies to consider how they can take advantage of this surge in interest to bolster their membership, and ultimately their committees.

The early part of next year will continue to be challenging, as it will take some time for all of the current rules to be relaxed, to enable our society to fully get back to its monthly meetings, coach trips, and dare I say the holiday that had to be cancelled. The successful introduction of vaccines will

Hasten our path to exiting the Covid restrictions and I personally will welcome the abolishing of the 30 people maximum in the Village Hall, which will be the first step back to normal. I am sure we all look forward to that.

On behalf of all the members, I thank the current committee for all their hard work over the last eight months in steering our horticultural ship though these turbulent times, and we all look forward

To stepping out into the light at the end of this Covid tunnel in 2021.